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SUBJECT: NCP Sounds Campaign Themes at Party Congress

¶1. (SBU) Summary: The National Congress Party (NCP) held its third party congress in Khartoum October 1-3. In the opening session, NCP hardliner and party Deputy Vice President for Political and Organizational Affairs Nafie Ali Nafie extolled the party's financial, numeric and organizational strength. In remarks at the opening and closing sessions, President Bashir rehearsed his stump speech: NCP is the party that brought peace to Sudan via the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA); the NCP is unjustly accused of fomenting the conflict in Darfur; oil has helped Sudan break free of the West's hegemonic designs on Sudan; the NCP will continue to strengthen ties with China and Russia, but maintain relationships with European nations and the United States. However, he stressed in both speeches that these countries must avoid dominating or dictating policies to Sudan. He also emphasized that the NCP will hold free and fair elections and a referendum open to all southerners. The party rallied other political parties to their anti-hegemony theme, notably the National Umma Party's (NUP's) Chairman Sadiq Al-Mahdi who urged Sudanese to forget their differences in order to resist "hegemony and penetration," and prominently celebrated delegations from China, North Korea, Africa and the Middle East, including Hezbollah/Lebanon. Yasir Arman, the sole Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) representative to attend, provided the only counterpoint to NCP claims, noting that the CPA had been the work of all Sudanese, and that the NCP failed to attend the All Parties Political Conference in Juba. Arman, who as SPLM northern sector representative, is outspoken and often criticized by the NCP, was heckled when he came to the podium during the closing session. His brief remarks also met with studied silence when he finished.

¶2. (SBU) (Summary Cot'd) During its convention, the NCP strove to prove that it is well-funded, well-organized in both the North and the South, growing in numbers and poised to win the elections, which it promised would be held pursuant to the CPA. The party's second key message, that the NCP is a bulwark against Western economic and political domination, was clearly intended to provide a narrative explaining the ruling party's failure to provide the populace with promised peace dividends, and to inspire people to rally around their embattled president and return him to office. While that narrative may have resonated with the party faithful at the convention, it is unlikely that many outside the party will find it compelling. (Septel) End Summary.

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Nafie Describes Party's Successes, Strengths  
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¶3. (U) The National Congress Party (NCP) held its third general party congress in Khartoum during October 1-3. Presidential Adviser and NCP Deputy Vice President for Political and Organization Affairs Nafie Ali Nafie told the group that businessmen contributed SPG 15 million (approximately USD 6 million), and said that the NCP's membership had reached more than 5 million. NCP is reaching out

through what it claimed were democratic means such as the 108 state assemblies, attended by more than 127,000 NCP members. He attributed the shooting death of the NCP Secretary General of the Women's Section of the party in Western Equatoria State to her effectiveness as a party organizer. Nafie detailed the party's successes at state-level conferences held in the southern states of Central Equatoria, Western Bahr al Ghazal, Warrap, Northern Bahr al Ghazal, Unity, Upper Nile, Lakes and Jonglei States, which he said had garnered support from women and youth and drew participants from among state government officials and SPLM representatives. Additional sectoral conferences on the economy, and on cultural, women's, student and youth affairs attracted the participation of 10,500 party members, he said. (Note: Embassy received no invitations to these conferences, and has no way of verifying the veracity of the numbers presented. End Note.) Nafie also stressed that the election will take place in April 2010, and that the NCP will accept the results.

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Bashir Rehearses His Stump Speech  
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¶4. (U) In opening remarks, President Omar El-Bashir reminded the group that it was the NCP that had succeeded in signing the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), which had stopped the war in the south. He called the accusation that the NCP was somehow responsible for the war in Darfur unjustified, and urged the Darfur rebels to return to the country to serve their fellow citizens and to participate as part of the government, as had the National Democratic Alliance (NDA), which is now a part of the Government of National Unity (GONU). He said it was the NCP that had succeeded in using oil to break free from western hegemony, and to take its place as the third largest economy in the sub-Saharan region, sixth largest on the continent. He told the group that the election will be conducted on time and transparently; that the referendum is a right stipulated in the CPA, that it will take place as scheduled, and that all southerners have the right to participate in it. Sudan is building its foreign policy on respect, and hoped to strengthen the country's relationships with China and Russia, as well as to establish understanding and friendly relations with Europe and America based, not on hegemony, exploitation and injustice, but on joint values.

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Al Mahdi Asks Solidarity Against Hegemony  
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¶5. (U) Former Sudanese Prime Minister and Chair of the National Umma Party (NUP) Al-Sadiq Al-Mahdi, who was overthrown in a bloodless coup by Bashir in 1989, addressed the opening session, thanking the NCP for the opportunity to attend, and calling on Sudanese to forget their differences so as to better resist hegemony and penetration. He blamed the diversity of ethnicities within Sudan for the country's "chronic problems", including delay in the implementation of the CPA, the Darfur crisis, and various regional disputes. In the name of the National Umma Party, he called for a national consensus to solve Sudan's problems. He expressed the hope that the NCP congress would result in a clear policy supporting democratic transformation, and either a just unity or a brotherly neighborliness should the south decide to secede.

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Ismail Chairs Third World Solidarity Session  
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¶6. (U) In a breakout session, captioned, "Peace and Development: The Twin Pillars of Stability in the Third World", Presidential Adviser Dr. Mustafa Osman Ismail shared the stage with a senior member of Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU), the political party of Robert Mugabe; the Former Defense Minister of Austria, the Chairman of the Indo-Arab League Partnership and the Chief of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) Mission in Khartoum. Other participants in the the audience included a large, high-level delegation from the Chinese Communist Party; a delegation from North Korea; representatives of Hezbollah and of the Palestine Liberation organization, the President of Niger and Samuel Haj, identified as a former Guantanamo detainee. Remarks by most panelists followed an already familiar pattern: Sudan has suffered from colonial rule and

intervention by the first world has hurt Sudan in many ways. The participants discussed how they could better cooperate to fix common post-colonial problems, and urged the western press to be more balanced in its reporting on the third world. One speaker singled out the United States, which he said unfairly interfered in Third World countries.

¶17. (U) The closing ceremony, held Saturday October 3, repeated familiar themes. In his speech, President Al Bashir characterized the NCP as "centrist", seeking to reach across party lines to include the full political spectrum ranging from the Communist party to the far right-wing Shura at the congress. He called the CPA one of Sudan's most important national achievements, and claimed that the NCP had come to power to "solve the problems of the country," and stressed that stability was key to addressing the "problem of Darfur." Bashir said that Sudan's Constitution mandated that elections take place as scheduled, vowing that they would be "fair and transparent" to win the confidence of the Sudanese people. Although "Unity is (our) destiny," and the NCP and Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) must work together to make unity attractive, the people of Southern Sudan will not be denied their right to self determination. Sudan will continue to reject attempts by other nations that seek to dictate policies to his country and subject it to foreign domination, he said. In other remarks, speakers expressed appreciation to the African Union (AU) and League of Arab Nations for opposing the International Criminal Court (ICC) indictment against President Bashir.

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Not Even Polite Applause for Arman  
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¶18. (U) While participation of all political parties was stressed by the NCP throughout the congress, one incident threw the NCP's much trumpeted "inclusiveness" into high relief. Following remarks by representatives of Sudan's Communist Party, and the ultra conservative Shura party, SPLM Northern sector head Yasir Arman spoke briefly. Arman, who as SPLM northern sector representative is outspoken and often criticized by the NCP, was heckled as he entered the hall. He told the group that the CPA was the achievement of all Sudanese citizens, and provided the way forward for Sudan's democratic transformation, culminating with the 2011 referendum on self-determination for the South. Arman stressed that the SPLM supports the 2010 general elections, which he said must be fair and transparent if they are to be accepted by all Sudanese citizens, and called for a fair, comprehensive solution to the conflict in Darfur.

In conclusion, Arman said that he appreciated the opportunity to address the NCP Congress, but regretted that the NCP had not participated in the recently-concluded All Political Parties Congress in Juba. The hall was silent as Arman, the only speaker not accorded even polite applause, left the podium.

¶19. (SBU) Comment: The NCP convention was clearly organized to deliver two key messages. In the first, the NCP strove to prove that it is well-funded, well-organized in both the North and the South, growing in numbers and poised to win the elections, which will be held as promised pursuant to the CPA. The second message, that the NCP stands firm against Western economic and political domination, appears intended to deflect the blame that many Sudanese place on the ruling party for its failure to provide tangible peace dividends or other development, and to inspire them to rally around their embattled president and return him to office. While that

narrative clearly resonated with the party faithful at the convention, it is unlikely that many outside the party will find it compelling.

ASQUINO